# DAG HEWARD-MILLS

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# OPPORTUNITIES

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## *Preface*

After teaching on the subject frugality, the Lord stirred me up to teach on the tendency of some people to waste or misuse the good opportunities, which God gives them.This inclination, which leads Christians to destroy and waste their lives, is even misguiding some ministers today.At the Lighthouse Cathedral, we have a pet name for a person who moves out of his good position or opportunity to become a rebel. We call him an “ORANGU”.Anyone who misuses money, opportunities, or resources is wasteful and needs to break out of this cycle of failure.This book is dedicated to the extinguishing of this destructive trait in our lives. May you value your God-given opportunities.

# Wasting Opportunities

The word “opportunity” means “favourable time, occasion or set of circumstances”. Many people in life lose a lot of good opportunities that come to them.

They do not only waste their money, but also their lives, resources and opportunities. Such people are living wasteful lives.One way that people lose good opportunities that come to them is by being extravagant. When you live beyond your means or spend money in excess, you have an extravagant lifestyle. This is a waste of good opportunity.Jesus told the story which has come to be known as the ‘Parable of The Prodigal Son’.

> *...A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them... took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.*
>
> *Luke 15:11-14.*

### *Five Good Opportunities Wasted by the Prodigal Son*

**1. He wasted the opportunity to benefit from the advice his father gave him.**

Just like Judas, most Christians have wasted the advice and preaching they received from their pastors. After many years have gone by, they have to join the song writer in singing, “Wasted years,

wasted years, oh, how foolish!"A man who was dying at the age of ninety-six was asked by his children what he wanted written on his tombstone after his death.He replied, "Write that I was four years old."He explained that he was four years old because he only got saved when he was ninety-two years. As far as he was concerned, the only time that his life had been useful was the four years after he found Christ. He had just wasted ninety-two years of his life!The prodigal son wasted a number of good opportunities. Some people are privileged to get the best advice, yet it seems they are unable to make good use of it. Judas had the best counselling, the best teaching, the best anointing, and the best example of glory and power; but he wasted it and went to Hell.Though we are living two thousand years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, we still believe in Him. Judas did not only hear Jesus. He actually saw Him and lived with Him.Do not waste the opportunity of good advice that comes your way!

**2. He wasted an opportunity to be great.**

The loving father had a party for the prodigal boy. But note that he told the older son, "...all that I have is thine." Meaning that all that was left of his father's property belonged to the older son.Yes, there was a party for the prodigal son when he returned home, but he had already squandered what his father had bequeathed him.So, if he would get anything, it would depend on the benevolence of his elder brother.The opportunity to have a good start in life had slipped away from him forever.In the same way, you could be in a good church, have a good pastor who teaches you the Word of God, and take it all for granted. Be careful not to waste the opportunities God is giving you!

**3. He wasted his position.**

He wasted his position as a son, and ended up a servant! He wasted his money and all the wealth that had been given to him.As a nation, my country Ghana is well-positioned to receive a lot of sunshine and rain. We have all that we need to reap an abundant agricultural harvest.Yet we import a lot of food, and are very far from being affluent. On the other hand, some European countries have very little land and a harsh, cold climate.In winter there are long nights and short days with little sunshine. Seeds cannot germinate when the ground is frozen for long periods. Yet most European countries produce so much grain that they have to throw some away.In Geneva I was surprised to find a car park under a lake, going down several floors. Under a lake! These people are using every inch of space.Some people have little, yet they do very much. But others have so much yet they do so little!You need to see where God has positioned you and make the most of it. You must stay in your God-given position. I have been in the ministry for several years now and have watched some young pastors move out of position. They probably don't realize that success is very much related to correct positioning.Let me ask you some questions now. What is wrong with being a younger son? What is wrong with being a younger brother? What is wrong with being an associate pastor? What is wrong with being a branch pastor?After all, you are still a fruitful member of the family. That is what matters!But this prodigal boy was unhappy that he was not the senior. He wanted to be on his own. He wanted to be in charge. So he moved out. What a terrible mistake!Some pastors had the opportunity to be great and fruitful in ministry, when they were associates or well-positioned ministers.However, just because they were assistants, they moved out of their good positions and became oddities in ministry. Often this comes out of a spirit which says, "I'm as good as he is!"When does a

minister become an oddity in ministry? This is when a fruitful and successful minister becomes a struggling and hustling rebel.This is exactly what the prodigal boy did. He moved out of his good God-given position as a younger aristocrat brother and ended up as a servant.In our local Ghanaian dialect we call this phenomenon “M’ate me ho.” (I have cut myself off.)Many churches have not been able to grow because assisting pastors have been plagued with this wasteful spirit of M’ate me ho.A Nigerian pastor friend of mine said something which vividly describes this phenomenon.He observed — IT IS BETTER TO BE THE LEG OF AN ELEPHANT THAN THE HEAD OF AN ANT.Indeed, the leg of an elephant is bigger and greater than the head of an ant, even though it is just a leg.God wants us to be as fruitful as possible in this short life of opportunities.Are you positioned in a church or in a family or in a job? Sit well in your ‘chair’. There are many people standing by ready to replace you!Do not waste your position.

**4. He wasted his inheritance.**

There are many people who inherited properties and lands but made nothing out of them.I remember the story of a rich man who left an inheritance for his widow and wasteful sons. There was a dispute in court over some of the property. Whilst the case was still in court, one of his sons took an air-conditioner from the house and deposited it at a drinking bar.Then he told the owner of the bar to deduct the cost of his drinks from the cost of the air-conditioner each time he came to the bar.He greedily drank away that whole air-conditioner!And believe it or not — He did the same thing with all the other air-conditioners in the house!This was a boy who was ready to misuse and waste valuable things. Just like the prodigal boy, he made nothing out of the

inheritance from his father.Let us come to the concept of spiritual inheritance.If you are like a son or daughter to your pastor, an inheritance of anointing and spiritual gifts will naturally pass to you — just as property naturally passes from a father to a son.Receive all the anointing and gifts you can. Don't waste your great spiritual inheritance! Elisha received Elijah as his father and called him "father".

*And Elisha saw it, and cried, My father, my father… 2 Kings 2:12.*

Elisha had a biological father called Shaphat. But he still called Elijah, "father". The anointing naturally passed from Elijah to his spiritual son, Elisha.My brother, make sure you receive all of your spiritual inheritance.

**5. He wasted his sonship.**

> *…Father, I… am no more worthy to be called thy son: Make me as one of thy hired servants.*

*Luke 15:18,19.*

Although the prodigal boy was a son, he wasted his position as a son and became a servant. Because he had wasted all his inheritance, he now had to apply for the position of a servant in his own father's house.This was a man who was born, bred and belonged to a house. All the servants knew him to be a son. Because he had wasted what originally belonged to him, he knew that he was not worthy to have the position of a son anymore.Instead he pleaded to be regarded as a servant.A son and a servant are two different people.

> *The servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.*

I have two sons. There are other people in my house who are not sons to me. These are two different classes of people altogether. Everything that I have belongs to my children.When I die, the things I own will not go to servants who work in the house — they are for my children. Just as when my father died, he left everything for us his children.At the High Court my father's will was read, "I leave to my dear wife who has suffered with me this… and that…, for my children Dag, Beatrix, Karen, Marilyn, Julia Heward-Mills…"None of his many servants were mentioned in the will.Do not walk away from valuable sonship relationships. When you leave the position God has given you, it is very difficult to return to that point again. The prodigal boy wasted his sonship.

## Wasteful Spirits

Let us begin to analyze the behaviour of this prodigal boy. Let us try to understand why he did what he did.

You can have prodigal sons, prodigal businessmen, prodigal wives, prodigal Christians and even prodigal pastors. The list is endless.The "wasteful" tag can be fixed on anyone who misuses money, opportunities and resources, as though they were in endless supply.In all cases, wasteful people do not seem to realize what they have. They seem to walk away from very good opportunities, and simply waste the blessings of life.Sometimes when people are near something great, they don't value it.You may have a good church, a good pastor, a good mother, a good father, or a good job. Do you realize how blessed you are?Someone may be in a good church, with a good pastor who feeds him with the Word of God. The pastor trains him to pray, sing, and generally brings him up in ministry.However, such a person may turn against the very people who helped him. And he walks away from golden opportunities.What makes people behave in this way? Why did the prodigal boy walk away from his golden position, opportunities, and riches?Why did he walk away from a bright future? Why?I believe he was influenced by the devil.I believe evil spirits influenced him to waste away his life.Demons are real, and they make people do evil things.A man who was driving at 120 miles an hour towards a cliff was advised to stop. He rather decided to go faster towards his own death. As a bystander the only reason that I could give for his behaviour, was that he was under the influence of something — perhaps alcohol or drugs.In the same way, when someone is under the

influence of evil spirits, he often does not heed advice but will continue in his sin.I believe this boy was influenced by evil spirits to do the things he did.This is the only explanation to his almost senseless behaviour.In medicine, there are many diseases which we call idiopathic. This means that they have an unknown cause. Many of these diseases with unknown causes are actually caused by evil spirits.I believe there are at least seven evil spirits which influence people to behave in a prodigal way.They may be sons, businessmen, church members, pastors, wives or husbands. But they can all be exposed to these spirits.Join me now as we begin a detailed study of the seven prodigal spirits.

## The Spirit of Beleyahal

Beleyahal comes from a Hebrew word which means useless, worthless, good-for-nothing, valueless, cheap or vile.

This is an evil spirit in the world which makes you good-for-nothing, valueless and cheap.By the time the devil finished with the prodigal son, he was destitute. He had to feed with pigs — animals which were considered unclean in Israel.Sometimes God elevates a man and blesses him with a good business and lots of money, but when he becomes successful in life, he decides not to serve the Lord. He rather spends his time and resources on women, food and extravagant living. In the end, he loses all his wealth and becomes worthless!The Beleyahal spirit leads you to squander all opportunities to do well and leaves you useless and worthless.I spoke to someone who had once been rich, but had wasted his wealth. He told me he would be unable to account for the money God had blessed him with.He said, “I earned a lot of money some years ago, but I spent it all on restaurants, discos and girls.” As he was speaking, I realised how penniless he had become. The devil had led him on a journey to waste his riches.Oh, how he wished he could have that opportunity to earn so much money again!It is this same spirit of Beleyahal that leads a young lady to have sexual affairs with so many men.After she has slept with Kuku, Yoofi, Fiifi, and all the other men, no “proper” person would want to marry her. She has now become cheap and valueless. Her dreams to marry and settle down may never be realized.Nobody wants a cheap thing, which everybody has played around with.It is the spirit of Beleyahal which makes you go to bed

with a pot-bellied unbeliever after he has bought a pair of shoes for you!It is this same spirit of uselessness that causes you to exchange your purity for a Chinese dinner. Dear sister, you are worth more than a portion of Chinese spring rolls. Do not be cheap! Stay pure! The right moment and the right person will arrive!Do not allow the spirit of Beleyahal to make you cheap and valueless!

## The Spirit of Greed

> *He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver…*
>
> *Ecclesiastes 5:10*

This is the attitude of the greedy person.

He is never satisfied with what he has. He is never satisfied with the opportunities and real situations that lie before him. He is always looking for something else, something special!A greedy person will often stretch out his hands to take something that does not belong to him.Look at what happened to Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the prophet. His master refused to receive money from a healed captain of the host of the King of Syria.However, out of greed, Gehazi went ahead, lied to him and took the money for himself. By this, Gehazi had disgraced Elisha's ministry forever. Elisha cursed him and his seed forever, so Gehazi ended up with leprosy.

> *The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto they seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.*
>
> *2 Kings 5:27*

Perhaps he was in line to become the most anointed man of God after Elisha but that opportunity was denied him because of the spirit of greed.I am certain that in the book of Kings there would have been more chapters written about the works of Gehazi, but they were never written.Greed destroyed his ministry and his entire life.The spirit of

greed can cause you to squander all the great opportunities that come your way. Some people are not called to be heads, but they want to be heads. They look with greed at the things their superiors in ministry have. They look with greedy eyes at the cars and houses which their bosses have!Other people's greed goes even further than that. They do not only want what you have, but actually want to be you!I was speaking one night to a pastor who had experienced the rebellion of several greedy junior pastors at the same time.He told me that in his opinion there were some pastors who would never be satisfied, no matter what they were offered or given. He complained bitterly about some of these greedy pastors, whom he said were even earning more money than himself.He went on to say that such people would not even be satisfied if he gave them his own wife.He said such people are so greedy that they actually want nothing but to replace you.They want to be you!Don't desire to be anybody. Be yourself!If you work with somebody, be content. Do not be greedy! You will not get to the top in a day. The only job that starts from the top is grave digging!My experience tells me that it is not easy to prosper in this life. It is a long, long road to the prosperity we all hope for. Impatience and greed will only destroy your opportunities in life.The Bible says, "Beware of covetousness." The prodigal boy had everything at home. Indeed, in his time of need he testified that even his father's servants had more than enough to eat at home. However, because he was not satisfied with all his blessings, he stretched out his hand in the spirit of greed to take what was not yet his. Jesus warns us about covetousness:

> *And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

*Luke 12:15*

Do you have the spirit of greed? Let Apostle Paul's admonition guide you and deliver you from this destructive spirit of greed!

> *But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.*

*1 Timothy 6:6-8*

## The Spirit of Evil Independence

Being connected to someone can be your only opportunity to make it in life and ministry. Your breakthrough may be connected to someone's vision. However, many people do not understand this and they only think of how to become independent. I believe in independence. But not every kind of independence is good.

Some independence is acquired in the wrong way and with the wrong motive. Independence becomes evil when it has the following characteristics:1. Acquired at the wrong time.2. Acquired in the wrong way.3. Acquired out of hurt, bitterness and hatred.4. Acquired out of rebellion against authority.5. Acquired with the wrong motive.Paul was independent. He said he consulted no one. Read his words:

> *For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it… I conferred not with flesh and blood…*
>
> *Galatians 1:12, 16*

Paul is telling us here that as far as his ministry is concerned, he is independent of all men.Timothy, however, was not independent. Paul wrote to Timothy and told him exactly what to do and exactly what to preach. When you read the book of Timothy you will realize that it is full of instructions from Paul.In ministry, Timothy was dependent on Paul. Paul gave him many instructions for ministry:

> *Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to*

> *reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*

*1 Timothy 4:12-16*

> *Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

*2 Timothy 2:1-2*

Independence when it is God's command, is a beautiful thing. but when it is not of God, it leads to destruction. All opportunities to make it in ministry fade away and the person is left independent but frustrated and non-performing.Many so-called independent churches acquired what I call evil independence.Some pastors, who have gone independent when God did not send them, are finding out that to be independent is not as simple as it may seem.I remember one rebellious pastor who left his home church breathing threats and curses. He boasted, "Give me six months, and I will show you all about church growth!" He spoke of all the great things he would do.However, as the years went by, like the prodigal boy, he found out that life and ministry are more complex than they look!The spirit of evil independence is the spirit that leads a person to independence but in

an evil way. Independence is a good thing if it is inspired, engineered and directed by God.The independent status of many African countries was born out of rebellion. In Ghana, we told our colonial masters that we had the right to manage or mismanage our affair; and that is exactly what we have done. We have virtually mismanaged our affairs for the last forty years!After forty years of independence, we are still going around in circles. There has been no substantial improvement in our roads, health care, economy, education and other sectors.Dear friend, apart from God's way, there is no other way. You can do it your way and not prosper, in spite of all your efforts.I know that evil independence looks quick, flashy and instantly successful.The Bible compares two builders in Matthew 7:24-27. One built his house on the rock while the other built his on sand. After sometime, it looked as though the one who built his house on sand was far ahead of the other.Before you could say, "Jack Robinson", his house was at the roofing stage. The "latest man on the scene" impressed everyone in the community. One day, the storm blew, and the house on the rock stood solid as ever; but the cheap one on the sand came crashing down, and was destroyed beyond repair.There are so many people walking in their own ways. They think that they are too old and too intelligent to be advised.

> *Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished.*
>
> *Ecclesiastes 4:13.*

They are doomed if they don't heed God's Word and walk in godly counsel. The spirit of evil independence is spurring them on to their destruction.

> *There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*
>
> *Proverbs 14:12, 16:25.*

Do you have the spirit of evil independence?A spirit of evil independence will rob you of all your God-given opportunities as you tear away from anyone who can be a blessing to you. Are you connected to anyone or any group? Do not pursue independence in an evil way! Do not destroy that opportunity.

## The Spirit of Foolishness

> *Reprove not a scorner lest he hate thee…*
>
> *Proverbs. 9:8*

> *He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame.*
>
> *Proverbs. 9:7*

Many of life's opportunities are discovered with good advice.

> *Without counsel purposes (opportunities) are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.*
>
> *Proverbs 15:22*

> *Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war.*
>
> *Proverbs 20:18*

However, not everybody wants advice or can handle it. The cardinal sign of the spirit of foolishness is found in the response of the foolish person to wisdom: He gets angry when he is advised.

A fool's reaction to advice will give him away.In fact, the fool will hate you for giving him sound advice. This is the spirit of foolishness.

> *… fools despise wisdom and instruction.*
>
> *Proverbs 1:7*

Being a pastor, I have learnt not to advice certain people in my church. Any attempt to counsel them will be misinterpreted.There are also many parents who can no longer counsel their children, because the spirit of foolishness is embedded in the children.I would not be surprised if many people spoke to the prodigal boy. Perhaps, his father spoke to him. His mother and brother may also have counselled him. But he was foolish and refused to listen.Uncles and aunties were called in. Pastors spoke. Bishops added their voice. But to no avail! The spirit of foolishness makes you deaf to advice and counsel.A married woman became extremely familiar with another man. Her husband and another relative advised her not to get too close to this other man.She got so angry with this relative, and has hated this person to this day. Fools get angry when they are advised.She insisted that she was not having any extra-marital affairs. But her husband suspected foul play.When she was confronted again concerning the paternity of one of her children, she got even more outraged.You see, what was happening was that, someone was making the mistake of advising a fool.After several years however, she admitted that she had unfortunately had an affair with this man. She went on to confess that one of her children was actually the child of this other man.Everyone was shocked! Remember, this woman became very angry when she was advised.

> *But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof.*
>
> *Proverbs 1:25*

The spirit of foolishness makes you hate advice. It makes you hate your counsellor. When you shut out advice and godly counsel from your life, you have shut the door to great opportunities and blessings!

Do you have feelings of resentment towards your pastors? Do you get angry with your parents when they are advising you?Then perhaps you have the spirit of foolishness!

## The Spirit of Selfishness

A selfish person does not care what anybody else thinks or feels. He is only concerned about himself.

Can you imagine the disgrace that came to the prodigal boy's father? Friends would have asked him, "We hear your child is feeding with pigs across the ocean. Is it true?"In our modern world, he would have received many faxes and phone calls. But the young boy did not care what anybody thought.This selfish attitude is everywhere. In church, I have seen people who turned against me to go on their own way. I even blessed some of them as they left!But they did not leave quietly. They spread false stories about the church and caused a lot of problems.Such people do not care about whatever happens to the church that nurtured them. Though they benefited from the church for years, they now destroy what they helped to build.

> *For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a TRANSGRESSOR!*

*Galatians 2:18*

These selfish people now prevent others from benefiting from what they benefitted from over the years.

> *Seemeth it a small thing…to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures?…*

*Ezekiel 34:18*

How can you eat up all the good pasture and then tread on the rest of it?What are the others going to eat? Don't be selfish!Is it a small thing for you to drink of the clear waters and after that excrete into the rest of it?What are the others going to drink?There are people who have drunk from the pulpit of a church for several years. When they decide to leave the church, they rather cause a stir in the church and say so many things that damage the reputation of the church and its pastor.When such selfish people leave the church, the rest of the congregation becomes confused: they cannot tell if they are in a good church or not — or whether they have a good pastor.Woe to you if you act in this selfish manner.Everybody grew up somewhere. I grew up in different groups. I belonged to a group called "Calvary Road Incorporated."I learnt a lot of my ministry skills from this group, and I am grateful to them for this.Now I don't belong to that group anymore. But the fact that I don't belong there anymore, does not mean I should destroy them.It is the pasture from which I grew up!It is the water from which I drank!Is it a small thing then, for me to eat of a pasture and after that trample it down, so that nobody else can benefit from it?Is it a small thing to drink of the waters and after wards urinate in it — so that nobody else can benefit from it?That is exactly what people do when they say evil things about the places they came from.Has somebody been a father to you and nurtured you in the ministry? Then remember that you are not the only one! Others are going to be nurtured by this same man of God.Don't urinate in the water you just drank out of.If you want to leave — please just leave. Go quietly and pray for blessings. In Ghana we have a saying: "You don't point at your father's house with your left hand."There are other Christians who take certain things for granted and live carelessly, regardless of the effect on other people.

> *Let not then your good be evil spoken of*

*Romans 14:16*

You have to think about other people and not just yourself.One day I spoke to a Christian brother and sister who were living together. I asked them if they were married. They told me they were not. Now, they may not have been committing fornication (which is highly improbable). But what would their next door neighbour think, seeing them living together but unmarried?If you are not married but live together, people will still see you attending ‘Goobley-gob’ Charismatic Church International. And they will say, “All these Charismatic churches are full of hypocrites.”You are giving your church a bad name. And you are giving other churches a bad name.The selfish person is not concerned about trampling upon the testimony of Christ and the church. He will make up every possible excuse. You must care what people think, especially if you are giving the wrong impression.It is a spirit of selfishness when we don’t care what happens to the next person.Do you have a spirit of selfishness?

## The Spirit of a Wild Goose Chase

A goose is a web-footed bird, larger than a duck and smaller than a swan. Geese are difficult to catch. (The next time you see a goose, try catching it!)

To go on a wild goose chase, is to run after elusive things.People are searching, looking for something to satisfy them. Anyone who drinks of the pleasures of this world will never be satisfied!Jesus said:

> *He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but he drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst again.*
>
> *John 4:13*

What are you searching for?Students think that if only they can pass their exams, they will be alright. They can then have good jobs with fat salaries. Those who are not married are thinking of how to get a fiancée or “beloved” and how to prepare for their wedding.Those who are working are also burdened with getting more money, buying a car, building a house — the list is endless.At every stage in life, people are not satisfied with what they have. So they think that reaching another level in life is the only way to satisfaction, but the goal post keeps shifting. The Bible teaches us that the goal posts of life keep shifting!

> *When goods are increased, they are increased that eat them: What good is there to the owners thereof?*

*Ecclesiastes 5:11*

The prodigal boy was looking for something to satisfy himself. He went after prostitutes! He travelled! He changed home and environment — a truly wild goose chase.There are people who are dancing their lives away but are still not satisfied.The hunger in your heart cannot be filled by anything in this world. It is only Christ who can give you true happiness.The Bible says

> *…to fear God and to keep his commandments: this is the whole duty of man.*

*Ecclesiastes 12:13*

I once met a sexual pervert, and was very surprised, because I was not used to this kind of practice in our part of the world. I interviewed him. I wanted to know why a person would behave in this manner.He told me that he had had so many different relationships that he was no longer satisfied by them.My question is, when he is no longer satisfied what will he do? He chased after elusive things, and therefore never got satisfied.

> *Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?*

*Isaiah 55:2*

Are you chasing elusive things? Only Christ can satisfy you.

## The Spirit of Ungratefulness

Many people are ungrateful for what they have.

They do not value God. They do not value the church, the pastors, or their teachers.They do not value anybody who helps them.It's only a few people who remember, and are grateful for what was done for them.A pastor can sacrifice the best part of his life for his congregation. He can take time off to pray for them, counsel them, and nurture them with the Word. He will give all of his time to them — at the expense of his family.However, it is amazing that many people do not value what the pastor does for them. They easily forget the sacrifice he made on their behalf.Jesus knew that we could easily forget the price he paid on the cross, so he instituted "the Lord's Supper".The Lord's Supper is intended to remind us of the true founder of the Christian church.Other people could easily overshadow Christ if we allow it. The pastor is not the hero of the church, Christ is!At weddings, I administer communion to the bride and groom. Why do I do this? In that moment of their great joy, I want us all to remember that the marriage was made possible by Christ our Saviour.I want us to remember Christ and be grateful to him!When you listen to the response to the toast by some bridegrooms, you realize they are more grateful to other people for their marriage than to God.The bridegroom is grateful to the one who connected him to the bride, but friend, the greatest connector is Jesus.Let's be grateful to Him! One result of ungratefulness is that it opens the door to all sorts of plagues.

> *Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart*

> *from out of his house.*
>
> *Proverbs 17:13*

Many people do not appreciate what somebody did to get them into the opportunities they had in life.As a father, I now understand what my parents went through for many years in order to give me a sound education. I have to wake up early each morning to take my children to school. As I do this, I begin to comprehend the inconveniences my parents went through on my behalf.If I refuse to show gratitude after all these sacrifices, I will be inviting curses on my life.You should always remember never to repay evil to somebody who has been good to you — be it your pastor, mother, father, stepmother, stepfather, or whoever.Jeremiah was one of the men of God in Biblical times who suffered at the hands of ungrateful people. In the 20th chapter of Jeremiah, he asked a soul-searching question:

> *Shall evil be recompensed for good? ...*
>
> *Jeremiah 18:20a*

He complained to God that his church members had dug a pit for his soul. He was reminding God that as a pastor he had interceded many times for them.

> *...Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them and to turn away thy wrath from them.*
>
> *Jeremiah 18:20b*

After that he cursed them:

> *Therefore deliver up their children… And pour out their blood… Let a cry be heard from their houses…*

> *Forgive not their iniquities… Shall evil be recompensed for good?*

*Jeremiah 18:21-23,20*

The Bible makes it clear that curses follow ungratefulness.Politically, people are ungrateful. I sometimes wonder about the lives of politicians, because people are generally ungrateful to them.At least in the ministry, God will reward us in heaven. The reward for many politicians is ungratefulness. That is why it is called a thankless job.Many of the roads in Ghana are in terrible condition. There is a city in Ghana (whose name begins with a 'K') which has had many of its roads asphalted. The roads in that city are in even better condition than those in the capital.However, the people in that city were accustomed to saying that even if the roads had been made of terrazzo, they would still not have supported or appreciated the government which authorized the construction of those roads!People are generally ungrateful.Some children grow up to insult and mistreat their parents. Whether your mother is a prostitute or not, she is still your mother. Whether your father is a criminal or not he is still your father!Respect them and be grateful to them for at least bringing you into this world.All ministers of the gospel should know that people are generally ungrateful.You would be naive to think that people (generally speaking) will appreciate your efforts.Jesus knew it! He experienced it!One time, following an attempted murder, Jesus asked the angry crowd:

> *…Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; FOR WHICH OF THESE WORKS DO YE STONE ME?*

*John 10:32*

The people were going to stone Jesus for doing good.May God help us never to be ungrateful.Ask yourself— am I an ungrateful person?

# The Road to Lost Opportunities

There are two cardinal mistakes which make us lose every opportunity that comes our way. Anybody who makes these mistakes will definitely be denied the blessings of all God-given opportunities. I want to share these mistakes with you now:

**1. The Mistake of Separation**

> *… and took his journey into a FAR country and there wasted his substance with riotous living.*
>
> *Luke 15:13.*

The first mistake that leads to wasteful living is separation from God or fellowship.The prodigal son knew that he could never waste his life away at home. He had to separate himself from the rest of the family, so that he could be on his own. Then he could do whatever he wanted to do.I have lived with people who once worshipped and served the Lord. Today, some of them fight against God. This happened because they were separated from fellowship.I remember going to counsel a backsliding brother. He took a cigarette, lighted it and began smoking right in front of me. When I attempted to restrain him he replied that his intention was to make me see him smoking.Then he showed me a picture of a scantily dressed girl lying on him.When I picked the Bible to talk to him, he said, “Wait a minute. I know which verses you will quote at this time.” And he quoted the scriptures one after the other.You see, there are certain sins a Christian can never commit when he is in fellowship with the

brethren. Before he commits them, he must go away, separating himself from God and the church.The prodigal son had to 'journey into a far country'. He did not just go to any country, but a far country, where there was no way any member of his family could communicate with him. There was no telephone, no fax, no airmail and no e-mail for communication.He was far away, where nobody could see him, and nobody knew him.Some people deliberately move from church to church in order to be where their history or background is not known.That is why the devil would like to keep you from coming to church.Since I became a Christian, I have always been afraid to be alone, that is, to stay away from the fellowship of the brethren.I went to England to visit an uncle after my 'O' levels. He had great plans for me to live in England. His intention was for me to continue my education and become a medical doctor in England. He even sent me to a local school to get me acquainted with the system.But I decided not to stay in England, because I was then a new convert. I did not know of any vibrant "born-again" church there. Moreover, I did not know any Christians I could fellowship with.I believe that it was a crucial turning point in my life. That was an important crossroad in my walk with God. If I had stayed on in that spiritually dry place, I would probably have backslidden by now.Some people would grab this opportunity thinking it was a major breakthrough for them. They would claim God had opened a door for them.Chief, God does not lead you to backslide!!

> *For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul…*
>
> *Matthew 16:26*

When you are separated, you will not hear the voice of God or the

right advice anymore. Instead, you will be exposed to all sorts of evil thoughts.This could be the reason why so many branch pastors rebel and become wasteful — separation. They separate themselves from sweet communion with other level-headed ministers. I try to have a lot of interaction with all the pastors. Fellowship will keep us all in touch.David said,

> *…that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.*
>
> *Psalm 27:4*

When you come constantly to the house of the Lord, you will see the beauty of the Lord. This will prevent you from living a wasteful life of sin.

**2. Bad Company**

> *…thy son… which has devoured thy living WITH HARLOTS…*
>
> *Luke 15:25*

The prodigal boy did not waste his money alone. There were harlots to help him do so.There will always be bad company to help you do bad things. When you are in a group, you have so much false confidence. You think everyone is just like you.This boy was surrounded by prostitutes who sucked all the money out of him, till he became penniless.One translation of the Bible says, “Bad company ruins good morals.” Another translation also says

> *…Evil company corrupts good habits.*

*1 Corinthians 15:33 (NKJV)*

A born-again Christian should make friends with Christians. There are too many Christians whose friends are people of the world — people who don't believe in the things that they believe in.You must know that your friends affect you more than your church does.You go to church two or three times in a week. But you see and communicate with your friends all through the week.Bad company will cause you to waste your life away. The prodigal boy wasted all his life by keeping company with bad people.Dear friend, what company do you keep? Who are your friends?

## Give No Place

Cast out the spirit of evil independence.

Overcome the spirit of selfishness.Do not yield to the spirit of a wild goose chase.Defeat the spirit of ungratefulness.You have one life and you cannot afford to waste it.Dear Friend, determine not to waste GOLDEN OPPORTUNITIES given to you by God!